

4. How can Reconstructionism hope to avoid (prevent) separate and distinct Judaism from evolving in each cultural area and in each generation?
5. To what ends can Reconstructionism properly evoke the sacrifices which traditional Judaism received for its ritual?
6. What function (part) does the concept of "unity of purpose" play in integrating world Judaism?
7. How may ritual observance be maintained once it loses the status of law, notwithstanding the lack of coercive power which enforces Jewish law today?

The third question of those which Steinberg has to answer has been troubling me for some time. I have been holding out against Reconstructionism's becoming a fourth movement parallel with and competitive to Orthodox, Reform and Conservatism. Perhaps that danger might best be guarded against by identifying Reconstructionism as a left wing movement of Conservatism with which it certainly has more in common than with Orthodoxy and Reform. A few days ago Golub, of his own accord, suggested that relationship as one to be accepted, on the ground that it would enable Reconstructionism to capitalize on the natural tendency of people to compromise and on the good-will which the Conservative movement enjoys by reason of that fact. However, when I repeated this argument of Golubs to Ira and Eugene Kohn, they rightly pointed out that we would, on the other hand, be losing the opportunity of influencing ~~many~~ The Reform and nationalist groups if we were to become fully identified with and limited to the Conservative movement.

I called up Steinberg and suggested to him that he answer the third question in the negative, for the reason stated above.

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Friday, January 30, 1942

This has been a very active and fruitful week for me. I left Saturday night at 6:40 for Gary with the N.Y. Central and came back from Chicago yesterday at 11:30 with the Pennsylvania.

I arrived at Gary on Sunday at 11:35 A.M. and was met at the station by Dr. (?) Julius L. Siegel, the rabbi of Temple Beth El and the president of his congregation, David Bain

As background for my experience at Gary it is necessary to record the subject which had been chosen for the lecture I was to give, and Siegel's answer to Janet Weisman's letter saying that I wanted to know something of the nature of the Jewish community in Gary and of the audience which was to attend and the religious, general and Jewish problems which disturbed them. The subject chosen was "The Place of Religion in Human life." The reply to Weisman's letter was written on the back of the one sent to him by Miss Weisman and read as follows: "Our congregation which sponsors the forum is considered Orthodox, but has many shades verging from extreme to Conservatism, Reform and intermediate position. Many are simply 'traditional', i.e. subscribing to customs and ceremonies and to kashrut as simply the 'Jewish way,' without any religious significance or sanction. There is a Reform Temple, too. Most people would ask about the meaning of religion and whether our practices, customs, etc. are the teachings of religion and whether they are calculated to bring out religious values." He added a P.S. "Please excuse this hurried note."

As soon as I was seated with Siegel and Bain in the latter's car I began to ply them with questions about the community, the congregation, the religious school. But I was not able to get very far with my questioning because we soon reached Siegel's house, 641 Delaware St. There I found myself in a small rather poorly furnished little apartment on the second floor. His wife was busy preparing the dinner and a 2½ year old little boy was introduced to me as their child. Before we sat down to the meal I proceeded with my inquiries about the congregation, the rabbi and his activities. When we came to a point in the discussion where Siegel's personal problem was touched on, his wife would interject a remark, as she was moving back and forth from the dining room to the kitchen.

Siegel is a graduate of long standing from the Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. I remember having received a letter from him a very long time ago while he was rabbi at Toronto. That letter was a sort of personal confession and a request for advice. He was then very much troubled by religious doubts, and he realized that he did not properly belong in the orthodox rabbinate. Moreover,

he wanted to get married and if I am not mistaken asked me whether I might not help him find a suitable young woman. Neither the contents of the letter nor my inquiries about him tended to assure me that 'he was all there.' I was therefore pleasantly surprised to find myself his guest and him a very sensibly spoken person. But the story of his present incumbency impressed me as rather tragic.

He is 43 years old, short in stature, with prominent though not bulbous nose, and sandy colored hair which shows only on his temples, the rest of his head always being covered, and which you inevitably envisage as coming out in long earlocks. You hardly notice that his face is clean shaven, so strongly is the Yeshiva written on it. I was therefore amazed at hearing him complain bitterly of the unhappy position in which he finds himself, in having to teach the kind of Judaism which he has long outgrown. He does not believe in the supernatural origin of the Torah and yet he dare not breathe a syllable that might betray his doubts. This inhibits him in all that he thinks and expresses and nullifies any possible effectiveness he might exercise in the ministry. His audiences are always the older people, the immigrant generation, 50 and over. To interest them he has to resort to the old kind of "drush" in Yiddish. Interest them he must, because they are the main supporters of the congregation and the element in control of it. On the other hand despite his most strenuous efforts to interest the younger people in Jewish subject matter, especially the young married couples, he has met with no response. They identify him in their minds as the spokesman of the older people and their views. To say or do anything that would break down the wall that divides him from the young people might jeopardize his position. The younger people on the other hand are too apathetic or indifferent concerning Judaism to antagonize the elders. The result is that the congregation is stagnant and is doing nothing which holds out any promise of a Jewish future for its people. Its membership numbers at present about 150 families, according to the rabbi; and 185 according to the president. When I asked the rabbi's wife how many of the homes observed kashrut, she said that about 100 bought kosher meat, and that is as far as their kashrut went, but that only 10 were strictly kosher. How little knowledge its leading laymen possess about the present struggle of Judaism is

is characteristically attested by their choosing to call their synagogue "Temple Beth El" when in their entire outlook they are almost intransigently reactionary.

As in all such situations I remember my own at the Jewish Center, the main obstructionist is usually a zealous worker who has been brought up on traditionalist fare which he may have enjoyed and who wants to run such fare down the throats of those he works with. In this instance the president Bain, a man in the forties. He claims to have studied in a Yeshiva in the old country till he was 17. He is one of the very few who understand some Hebrew and he regards himself as the guardian of tradition. Presumably he watches every step his rabbi takes and makes life quite miserable for him. Yet when I got into a confidential mood with this Mr. Bain as he sat and conversed in the railroad station before my train pulled in, he confessed that he too was troubled by religious doubts. He mentioned specifically the chosen people idea as expressed in the prayer "Alenu." When a person can get that far in his doubts he is certainly no longer orthodox. But for that very reason he may prove the most difficult ~~thing~~ obstacle to overcome, when any one suggests some very much needed change.

After having learned all this about Siegl's congregation I was certainly not going to give them a talk on the place of religion in human life. I might as well have tried to talk on higher mathematics to six year olds. In fact from Siegel's reply, which I mention above, I surmised that I would have to bring down what I wanted to say to the simplest possible terms especially terms familiar to a traditionally minded audience. While on the train I spent a couple of hours at least in trying to formulate a way of making Reconstructionism palatable to them. The following is the way I presented it:

The reason most Jews are giving up Judaism is that they have given up the old ideas about religion and have not found any new ideas to take their place. The old ideas on which people based their religion were a) that God dictated the Torah; b) that the miracles recorded in the Torah actually happened, c_ that miracles will happen again when the time comes for the Messiah to appear.

The new ideas on which to base religion is that it is a system of principles and practices which are intended to get people to make the best use of the civilization or group life by which they live, i.e. to enable them to use their common needs, interests, hopes and ideals as a means of making the most of their lives.

The relation of a religion to a civilization is like that of a (p 273)
to the thing over which it is recited. We American Jews in trying to have Jewish religion without Jewish life are in the position of one who recites a "a benediction in vain." (I was going to add that Reform Judaism which assumes that it is possible to have Jewish religion abstracted from Jewish life as the sanction of American civilization, is like a person who recites the benediction over cake.)

If we want to have Jewish religion we must have Jewish life or civilization. That was easy in the past when Jews had to live in their own civilization only. Nowadays we have to live in two civilizations. But if we want to continue living in the Jewish civilization we must fit it into a pattern that would not clash with the pattern of American life. To illustrate what is involved in living in two civilizations I gave an analogy the task of having to change a one family house into a two family house.

From that point on I developed the four elements in the program: 1) cultivating Jewish consciousness; 1) fostering Jewish unity; 3) adopting a Jewish ethic; 4) practicing Jewish piety.

When I came to the synagogue at 3:30 there were a few ~~six~~ stragglers, middle aged men and women and almost no young people. Siegel tried to explain that Rabbi Morton Berman was in town scheduled to speak in a local church. That might keep away a number from my lecture. After about 15 minutes some 60 or 70 people came. I spoke as directly and plainly as I could. The people were very ~~six~~ attentive though I doubt whether they understood what I was driving at. After I was through one or two people put questions which I answered briefly. Siegel had to officiate at a wedding. He therefore turned me over to Bain and one other person, I think the vice president of the congregation, to see me off to the train for Ft. Wayne where I arrived at 7:50 P.M. that Sunday.

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Saturday, Jan. 31, 1942

During the fifteen or twenty minutes that we sat at the station, waiting for the train to arrive we conversed about the failure of the congregation to respond to Rabbi Siegel's efforts. I tried to intimate that we must make some concessions to the demands of the younger people who had a right to have their questions and doubts respected. Before I knew it this man Bain who was supposed to be adamant against all changes, and whose remarks at first seemed to bear out this reputation, suddenly began confessing that he himself was troubled by many religious questions. Every time he recites the prayer "Alenu" he said, he finds it hard to reconcile himself to the statement in which we thank God for not having made us like the other nations. When I told him of the formula I have substituted for that statement, viz that God has given us the Torah of truth, etc. he was delighted.

At Fort Wayne I was met at the station by J. M. Finkelstein, the director of the Fort Wayne Jewish Federation, which sponsored the lecture I was to give there. I learned from him that there were about 1000 Jews in that town, about equally divided between the Reform and the Conservative congregation. The Conservative congregation is headed by Rabbi I. A. Weingart who is a graduate of the Chicago Yeshiva. When he took hold of the congregation, about ten years ago, he found that it was dominated by a few old timers who were in the way of any adjustments to conditions. But unlike Siegel of Gary, he was able to rally the younger people around him and to get his congregation to identify itself as Conservative.

Finkelstein took me to the Reform Temple whose rabbi was out of town at the time. The arrangement with the local congregations is to have the out of town lecturers give their lectures one year at the Reform Temple and the other year at the Conservative synagogue. At the Temple I met Rabbi Weingart. He is a rather slim tallish man in the thirties, clean shaven and bald headed, sharp nose and wearing glasses. By his appearance I would have judged him a typical Hebrew Union College graduate. Only when he let slip in the course of our conversation a few words in Yiddish did I recognize in him the Yeshiva student.

The Temple environment physically was a much more pleasant one than that of the Gary synagogue -- which for some unknown reason is designated Temple Beth El. The audience too was an improvement on the Gary one both in numbers and quality. ~~There~~ Here too I talked on "The Pattern for Modern Jewish Life." But I was not afraid of using more than one or two syllable words. There was not much discussion after the lecture there either but that was because the entire presentation must have been too new for the audience to react too quickly. But from the way I held their attention I am sure they followed the general drift of my talk.

After the lecture a number of people, among them the president of the Federation and Finkelstein, met me at Rabbi Weingart's home. There the discussion turned upon the question as to what should be the function of the Federation. It seems that Finkelstein would like to have the Federation take charge of the Hebrew educational work of the community, while the rabbis would like Federation to confine itself to raising funds. I favored the idea of a communal Hebrew school with both rabbis, the Reform and the Conservative, in charge of the curriculum and conduct of the school. This did not seem to please Weingart, but I tried to win him over to the idea by pointing out that in the long run the community spirit which can be transmitted to the children only in a communal school outweighs the loyalty to the congregation and its rabbi, which is fostered in a congregational school.

In the course of my discussion in Weingart's home I touched upon the importance of helping to support the Seminary as one of the functions of Federation. I did this in compliance with the request made to me by Max Arzt, the Seminary campaigner, who had informed me that the Seminary had applied to the Fort Wayne Federation for an allocation of \$500.

I left Fort Wayne Monday morning, Jan. 26 and travelled by Greyhound Bus to Indianapolis where I arrived at 12:30. There I was met by Rabbi Elias Charry and a Mr. Weiss, the chairman of the Men's Club. Charry has been the rabbi of Cong. Beth El Zedeck for the last eight years. He was preceded by Milton Steinberg.

That congregation is a combination of what was formerly an orthodox congregation of the old type and of a Hungarian congregation that was known as Shaaray Zedekc. A Hungarian congregation used to model itself on the lines of the large Hungarian congregation in New York which a generation ago was headed by Rabbi Philip Klein who was assisted by Dr. M Drachman. Its cantor was the famous Joseph Rosenblatt. It was characteristic of Hungarian congregations to be not only strictly Orthodox, but also highly conscious of its Hungarian precedents. Some of those congregations like the one in Indianapolis would not ~~admit~~ admit a non-Hungarian as member. The compose character of Charry's congregation shows itself in its name and in the existence of two elements, one the Hungarian, intransigent in character, the other somewhat yielding.

Rabbi Charry and Weiss took me to a hotel for lunch. There we discussed for two hours a problem which is agitating the congregation, whether the congregation should sponsor the communal Talmud Torah, or should allow the Welfare Fund to do that. The congregation is willing to hve the Talmud Torah retain its communal character, in that it would retain the name of some former patron who had supported it financially. (That sounds like a Hungarian-Jewish trait.) Both Charry and Weiss argued that while in principle we should favor communal sponsorship for a Hebrew school, in practice it cannot work because those who direct community policies are negativists or escapists from the standpoint of Judaism. They therefore wanted me to lend ~~an~~ my moral support to their policy of having the congregationsponsor the Talmud Torah.

Apropos of that discussion when I went to my room inthe hotel I read over again the letter Charry had written in answer to the request to furnish me information concerning the background of the audience I was to address. In that letter Charry writes as follows:

"The community generally is totally unconscious of communal coheion or association except for philanthropic purposes. In all other matters there is complete apathy even towards the need for community coordination. For five years I have been fighting within our Federation for at least a hearing for the idea of Community Council set up. Thus far I have gotten nowhere. The difficulty

has been that for the past fifty years this community has been dominated by the negativist attitude emanating from the Reform congregation and the indifferent Jews of wealth and social position. Our traditional Jews arrived on the scene when the mold had already set. In addition they have had all they could do to obtain an economic foothold, to say nothing of social recognition.

"My people to whom you are to speak are traditionally minded. Their background is meager, but their heart is in the right place. They have just now begun to attain economic status. Their children are demanding their rightful place and our congregation is becoming more vocal in its demand for more intensive Jewish life within the community. It has taken years of work to evoke and coordinate this expression. Needless to say we have still made little headway within the community, but we have made tremendous strides within our own four walls. In number and prestige (I think they number about 300 families) as well as in influence on our own people we have progressed wonderfully. What my people need most of all is a clear picture of what we should be headed for in Jewish life and the best means to attain that goal. Given the goal and known the direction, my group here can do wonders, for it is a vital and energetic congregation."

That the foregoing is to a large extent an idealized picture of his congregation is evident from the following from the same letter (dated Jan. 21/42):

"It must be made extremely clear to the members of my congregation that our congregation is, in itself, a Jewish community wherein every aspect of Jewish life, religious, cultural and social, ought to find its origin and impetus. Some of my people have some strange notions. On the one hand, there are those who feel that the synagogue should be nothing but a 'prayer meeting' house (at least where prayers are held regularly, even though they themselves do not attend). At the other extreme we have those who feel that the synagogue is a kind of refuge where functionaries take care of the necessary aspects of Jewish life. (I think he refers to the various occasions in a person's life when religious functionaries are called in to perform certain rites)...While these segments are small, they nevertheless present a serious problem, because they are vocal in their opposition to any forward moving step in the direction of a more unified Jewish life

centering in the synagogue...We are terribly anxious to incorporate every possible aspect of Jewish life within the confines of our synagogue, because we are convinced that only so will we be able to perpetuate a healthy, unified and wholesome Jewish life in Indianapolis. It is important that they hear from you that such is the aim set up by the Seminary and the Rabbinical Assembly, and the goal our movement has set up for itself."

Noting the contrast between the idealized view of his congregation in the first part of his letter and the more realistic picture presented in the second part, and knowing also Charry as approximating the salesman type of mentality rather than that of the true rabbi, I cannot but see in his eagerness to "incorporate every possible aspect of Jewish life within the confines of our synagogue" little more than a bid for power. Nevertheless, if we can achieve an inherently worthwhile philosophy and program of Jewish life and organization it might be possible to channel such drive for power into Jewish creative survival.

One thing, however, did become clear to me as a result of the discussions I had with Charry and Weiss; it is something I hadn't fully appreciated till then. I understand now why my contention that the framework of Jewish organized life must be that of the community and not one based on the synagogue, while theoretically correct is from a practical standpoint unworkable. The matter is very well put in a letter I received from Solomon Goldman (dated Feb. 19, 1941) in answer to one in which I had taken him to task for urging the ~~h~~ (? p. 278) of the synagogue. This is what he wrote: "I have come to see in many of the rabbis the only people with a Jewish background and with a sincere desire to do something with the American Jewish community. I should like to include among them many Hebrew teachers, a few Hebrew educators, a small number of Zionists, and a very small number of social workers. Now my own experience has shown me that whenever the positive and constructive elements in Jewish life join with the negative and assimilationist elements the latter tend to gain the upper hand. That is not due to their superior qualities as leaders, organizers or propagandists, but because they are moving in the direction of the environment. The environment tends sharply towards assimilation and the assimilationists have always had the advantage because

of this powerful ally. I had hoped that the community councils or welfare funds might prove the nuclei for the reconstruction of American Jewish life. (This expresses exactly how I have felt about those councils and welfare funds. M.M.K.) I am grievously disappointed. Not only are the welfare funds and community councils throughout the land as at present constituted hostile to liberal Judaism in any sense of the term, but what is worse, these boards have neutralized the character and cooled the ardor of those of our people who have joined them. I am, therefore, coming to the conclusion that we might perhaps best be able to build through the synagogue, provided we strengthen the backbones of the rabbis. I think the rabbis still have a great opportunity, if they want to seize it."

In giving the lecture that evening in Indianapolis I took care to say when discussing community as an element of the Jewish unity or cohesion which we must strive for, that in such community only those Jews had a right to take a leading part who wanted a Jewish future in America, and only those agencies and organizations that made the striving for such a future the basic assumption of all its activities. To drive that point home, I used the analogy of the United States before the Civil War when the unionists argued that a nation cannot be half slave and half free, and that a house divided cannot stand. Likewise there could be no ~~Jewish~~ Jewish community half assimilationist and half survivalist.

Before the lecture I was the guest of honor of about fifty people of Chary's congregation. That was the group to which I brought the greetings of the Seminary. I urged them to give the Seminary their moral and material support. This was the second group on this trip that I addressed in behalf of the Seminary in compliance with Max Arzts' request.

I left Indianapolis Tuesday morning and got to Chicago at 12:30. I was met at the Illinois Central Station by Solomon Goldman who took me to the Covenant Club where about 30 people met me at luncheon. That luncheon had been arranged by the Friends of the Seminary. In my talk to them I mentioned the fact that the one thing that impressed me most about the Jews I addressed in the various communities was that from the standpoint of their crudity, lack of culture, traditions and standards, they resembled very much a frontier population. Their ignorance of

Judaism was not only abysmal but dynamic. Of the various groups in that population those which were identified with the Conservative synagogue were most creative and held out most promise of a Jewish future.

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Sunday, Feb. 1, 1942

In the evening I lectured on "The Place of Religion in National Life." I made the point that the function of organized religion is to act as a bond of national, church or imperial unity and that it carries out this function in two ways: a) it endorses the nation's aims and b) it formulates the duties essential to the attainment of those aims.

Insofar as a religion performs these functions it may be either a good or a bad religion, depending upon the aim which unify the nation. (Incidentally, this is one of the most difficult notions about religion for people to grasp. Even those who are intellectually trained cannot accustom themselves to the idea that a religion which functions in the manner described above is not superstition even though it helps a people that is gone berserk like the Germans.)

If a religion addresses itself to outlived and obsolete aims and neglects to reckon with aims that are vital and significant, the nation is devoid of morale. To recover its morale a ~~xxx~~ nation either reinterprets its traditional religion or adopts a new one. This principle throws light on the Jewish past and present and on what is happening in the present world crisis.

There was an attendance of about 400 people. I do not think that most of them are members of the congregation. I doubt whether out of 3000 people actually identified with Anshe Emet there were more than 200. The audience would not have been of very high calibre, if I may judge from the very few questions that were handed in after the lecture, nor were those questions any too profound.

After the lecture I went in with Goldman and his wife to his study, a most magnificently furnished room in his synagogue. We were joined by Judah Nadich, Goldman's assistant rabbi and by Rabbis Green and Pekarsky. The argument turned on the question whether the scientific approach to religion, which I employed in my lecture was calculated to give the people a true understanding of religion and respect for it. Green and Pekarsky doubted the basic assumption of my talk. They could not reconcile themselves to the idea that the main function of religion was to endorse rather than to initiate ideals and aims. They failed to note that I had not spoken of religion in general, but of organized religion. The religious genius, such as the prophet or saint, does not belong to that category. Secondly they underestimated the significance of endorsement. The President of the U.S. exercises leadership through his power of endorsement.

The best part of my trip was the luncheon meeting at the Standard Club on Wednesday, Jan. 28. The following were present at that meeting which lasted from 12:45 to 5 P.M.: Honor, Solomon Goldman, Charles Shulman (rabbi of Glencoe), Pekarsky, Blumefield, Sidney Jacobs (journalist) Siegel, Graubart, Nadich, Green (rabbi of Peoria) Essrig (Hillel at Chicago Univ.), Jacob Weinstein, Birnbaum, Arnoff. Those who wanted to come but were prevented were Felix Levy, Morton Berman and Agus.

I stated as the basic principles of Reconstructionism, first, the need for the sake of being understood, of equating religion with religious civilization. The reason for that is that religion is a kind of vitamin that cannot be separated from the kind of food substance, so to speak, in which it inheres. Secondly, if we are to live in two civilizations, the American and the Jewish, we have to reconstruct the Jewish civilization so as to make compatible with American civilization. This calls for cultural budgeting.

I then enumerated the four items which must constitute for us Jewish civilization. 1. Jewish consciousness to be cultivated by means of Jewish history, Hebrew, Jewish atmosphere and art; 2. Jewish cohesion to be fostered by means of a) Palestine, b) fellowship in the synagogue, c) community; 3) Jewish ethics; 4) Jewish piety.

The formulation in detail of these purposes and their translation into activity are to be achieved through 1) a school of thought to consist of rabbis, educators, social workers, artists and writers, 2) the organization of a social framework consisting of congregations, 3) devotee groups, 4) the use and spread of Reconstructionist literature and periodicals.

After having given this general statement of the philosophy and program of Reconstructionism I appealed to those present to rally around Goldman as the one best qualified to lead them in the movement for an integrated and creative Jewish life.

Goldman pointed out two things as in need of being carried out as the projects of a Reconstructionist group: 1) To think through and formulate a rationale for Judaism that would make the significance and relevance of Judaism clear to the non-Jewish world; 2) To give thought to and formulate standards of Jewish behavior that did not fall within the category of ritual observance.

This second project has been occupying Goldman's mind for a long time. He has been revolted by the complete absence of all standards in Jewish life, and has therefore been insisting now for some time on the importance of concentrating attention on them. In his remarks he described himself as retreating from Jewish life because he could not bear to see the complete disregard of standards in Jewish organizations and professions that were dedicated to the conservation of Jewish values. He then instanced a number of cases: At the Rabbinical Association he had urged the rabbis to pass a resolution insisting that the confirmation exercises be held on Shabuot even if Shabuot fell on a weekday and that they be not held on the Sunday preceding to meet the convenience of the Jews who did not observe Shabuot. Despite such resolution some rabbis held the confirmation exercises on Sunday. Goldman remonstrated with them and asked them how they expected to influence their people socially and spiritually if they could not get them to make a slight sacrifice once in a lifetime for an important principle in Jewish observance.

The same rabbinical association had tried in vain to get one of its members to stop a theatre party that was to be given by the congregation on a Friday night.

And when he refused to pay attention to them nothing was done or said in reprimand of him.

Recently four authors of Jewish books were honored. One of them was Waxman who had completed a monumental four volume work on the history of Jewish literature to which he had given 30 years of his life. Another was one who had written a series of sermonettes for a bar mitzvah boy. On the program of the dinner at which these four were guests of honor the names were listed alphabetically to make sure that the four authors were treated equally. That same book of sermonettes written by a strictly orthodox rabbi had an introduction written by a man who had never been made bar mitzvah himself nor had ever worshipped in a synagogue.

These and other instances were adduced by him in proof of the importance of establishing some kind of discipline in Jewish life, an importance greater even than that of an acceptable ideology.

The discussion was participated in by Honor, Klumenfeld, Shulman, Green and one or two others. The outcome of the meeting was that a Reconstructionist group was organized right there with Goldman as chairman and Green as secretary.

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Monday, Feb. 2, 1942

Much has been said and written on the meaning of beauty. Although its main appeal is through the senses, and its content consists of things material and visible, it has as yet escaped satisfactory description or definition. All the more difficult is it to describe or define the nature of holiness. With the present tendency to treat the sense of holiness as an outlived reaction to things regarded as possessing magic potency of some kind, we are likely to eliminate from human life its most characteristic and humanizing factor. We must therefore try to catch it in the net of some concept or concepts and identify it sufficiently to make sure that we are able to cultivate it.

The most general thing we can say about it is that holiness is possessed by those things to which we react with an awareness that there is more to them than meets the eye, with a plus feeling. The person who maintains that nothing counts

for him but what he can count is a philistine, a secularist, a vulgarian. Holiness belongs to the qualitative aspect of reality.

When we probe further into the plus of things holy we discover that they possess three distinct traits: 1) mystery, 2) potentiality, 3) ends in themselves. As possessing mystery they are recognized as transcending man's power of understanding or control; they are something not ourselves, yet our deepest and truest selves. As such they are the antithesis of the simple, exhaustible, predictable. 2) As possessing potentialities, they are free and creative. 3) As being ends in themselves, they render life worthwhile without need of reference to anything beyond.

These three traits are common to personality, society, cosmos. To personality they give soul, to society, ecclesia or priest people, to the cosmos, God.

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Tuesday, Feb. 3, 1942

Arnold J. Toynbee in his "Study of History" Vol. II Oxford Univ. Press 1934 dwells upon a ~~mm~~ number of facts which have to be taken into account in Soterics.

He disproves the general assumption which dates back to the Greeks that "civilizations are apt to be generated in environments -- physical or human -- which offer unusually easy conditions to man." Incidentally he has occasion to point out how precarious is the work of man's hands and how much effort man has to put forth continually to prevent it from being swamped by primeval nature. He gives as illustration the Civilization of the (p.282) of Central America. "The ruins of the immense and magnificently decorated public buildings... stand in the depths of the tropical forest. The forest like some sylvan boa-constrictor, has literally swallowed them up, and now it is dismembering them at its leisure... Then, the victory of man over nature must have seemed utterly secure; the transitoriness of human achievements and the vanity of human wishes are poignantly exposed by the ultimate return of the forest, engulfing first the fields and then the houses, and finally the palaces and the temples themselves."

(p.4)

There can be no question that Man and the primeval forest belong to the same universe. They are the product of the same forces chemical, thermal, electric, gravitational. And yet they are enemies to each other. First man came and clears away the forest, and then the forest comes and avenges itself on man by devouring him and all his works. Stranger still, man requires this foe as a means of evoking from him those latent powers which would otherwise remain dormant. Toynbee instances case after case to prove that "civilizations arise as responses to challenges either human or physical; their birthplaces are regions in which life is relatively hard and not regions in which life is relatively easy."

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Wednesday, Feb. 4, 1942

To prove that "the greater the challenge the greater the response," Toynbee proceeds to analyze the stimulus of hard countries, new ground, blows, pressures and penalizations. Yet he realizes that that law is subject to the law of diminishing returns. "There are challenges of salutary severity that stimulates the human subject of the ordeal to a creative response; but there are also challenges of an overwhelming severity to which the human victim succumbs. In scientific terminology 'the most stimulating challenge is to be found in a mean between a deficiency of severity and an excess of it.'

One of the most fruitful truths is that "thinking is instrumental" and that ideas are instruments of thought. Another important truth is that instruments (means and material) impel us to use them, i.e. they generate the very purposes for whose fulfilment they are manipulated. Fortunately "the instrument in use rarely if ever conditions one solitary end. It is suggestive upon reflection of various ends." This explains how "instruments which have often been the means of man's enslavement" can also be the means of his freedom. (These ideas are taken from "The Metaphysics of Pragmatism" by Sidney Hook, 1927).

As a corollary of the foregoing is the fact that "all social reform whether undertaken in the name of God, social engineering or revolution presupposes a belief in the instrumental character of social institutions. Reorganization is easiest and most effective when the direction of the change is in line with the natural unfolding and growth of institutional forces."

The application of the general truths and the corollary to the reconstruction of Jewish life should prove very helpful. Conservatism might well be interpreted as the conservation of traditions and traditional institutions because of their value as instruments which naturally keep alive the purposes for which they were created. As distinct, however, from Orthodoxy which amounts to enslavement by the instrument, Conservatism discovers various purposes which traditions and traditional institutions might further, and chooses those which are relevant to our highest needs now.

From that point of view one might defend changing the law within the framework of traditional law. I fail to see however how that can be done. It may well be that the fact that tradition can no longer furnish us with the means of transforming it in accordance with our highest needs foredooms all attempts to conserve Jewish life.

But that point of view is helpful in indicating that the synagogue must be utilized in building up the social structure of Jewish life. We cannot afford to neglect its potentialities for those which inhere in a Kehillah, which is an instrument that as yet has no existence. It is futile to expect that at least the memory of the Kehillah of pre-emancipation days can be regarded as an existing instrument. The new kind of Kehillah that is needed henceforth is so radically different in structure and function from the traditional one that its creation must constitute a purpose. But to rely upon it as an instrument is utopian. This, indeed, is what is generally wrong with Utopians. The instruments needed for bringing them into existence are either completely outworn or lacking.

One of the basic problems in Soteris is: to what extent is it possible to regard man's will to salvation as en rapport in correspondence with metaphysical reality, or the world of existence? Such correspondence is affirmed in the belief in God. Perhaps the following might throw light on the question: "The anatomy of any body of logical doctrine cannot be divorced from the structural features of the environment in which that body thrives and is able to select and transform. (? p.284) of logic are linked up in some way with certain functional and structural invariants in the world of existence. (Why not argue the same way

about the will to make the most out of life and maintain that such will is "linked up with certain functional and structural invariants in the world of existence"? ~~It~~ This is what we mean by God. _MMK) It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this is not a doctrine of psychologism. Although mind cannot be taken out of nature, its presence is necessary to bring certain existential modes of operation or figured natural patterns into consciousness; to refashion situations and redirect environmental fluidities according to laws -- existences as a system of limiting conditions -- which it must recognize and which conditions the very possibility of its exercise" (Hook "Metaphysics of Pragmatism p. 68) "The causal connections between things and the logical implications of the propositions which have reference to those things are isomorphism (ibid)

Mind is itself the will to make the most out of life. Hence the foregoing definitely implies that the will to make the most out of life is en rapport with the world of existence.

* * * *

Saturday night, Feb. 7, 1942

Tonight Moshe Davis, Herman Kieval, Louis Gerstein, Max Vorspan and Jack Cohen met at my house for the purpose of organizing themselves into an activist Reconstructionist group of the kind I had in mind when I suggested the formation of a Jewish Religious Fellowship. There were to have been four more people present but this being the first meeting they could not change their previous plans in time.

I presented the four point program as the frame of reference for the activities of the group: 1) fostering of Jewish consciousness; 2) Jewish unity; 3) Jewish ethics and 4) Jewish piety. It was decided that each man was to bring to the meetings the specific problems of whatever Jewish activity he was conducting, and in that way formulate detailed applications of Reconstructionism to the various phases of that activity. Vorspan will bring next time his problems pertaining to the Zionist Youth Organization which is in process of formation. The rest will take up each his own activities at subsequent meetings.

It was also decided to devote 15 minutes daily to Bible study with commentary, and to noting articles and books bearing on the four point program and pooling our information and reactions to them when we get together.

The men wanted to have the group designated as (p.285) . I consented to their using my name, but suggested that they use my second name and call themselves .

After the meeting Lena served sandwiches, cake and coffee and the men sang Hebrew songs. Harold and Florence Garfunkel asked to be allowed to be present. I was only too glad to have them come.
(Hebrew p.285)

* * *

Tuesday, February 10, 1942

Years ago (I believe it was when I had sent in my resignation to the Seminary and I had decided to withdraw) Adler in one of the few heart to heart conversations he had with me remarked: "The trouble with your writing is that you want to shock people." I wish I knew then what Shaw thought about saying things in a way that shocks people out of their torpor or stupidity. I would have quoted it to Adler. "In this world," said Shaw, "if you do not say a thing in an irritating way, you may just as well not say it at all, since nobody will trouble themselves about anything which does not trouble them."

The will to salvation finds both limitations and aids to its self realization in something which transcends it. It is always aware of that something, and if it functions normally it respects those limitations instead of rebelling against them and avails itself of those helps instead of regarding itself as self-sufficient. Viewed in terms of material cause, the will to salvation finds itself in an environment beyond its control and yet indispensable to its existence in that it constitutes the very matter upon which the will to salvation is exercised. From the standpoint of the functional interests the will to salvation finds itself transcended by the biological hereditary will to live, without which it would not

exist at all, and which at the same time makes its self-realization difficult. The rational values of goodness, beauty and utility, which serve directly the will to salvation. But they find themselves transcended by the value of truth, which points to something beyond man with which men must reckon, though it so often seems to bring frustration. Finally, the spiritual interests which quite evidently are in line with man's salvation so long as they refer to personality and society. But when they refer to God, they call attention to a reality that transcends human purposes. But there can be no question that both truth and godhood, by very reason of their transcendence, the one man's subjective standards of reason, the other man's subjective notions of purpose or meaning, operate as sources of both limitation and help to man's urge to make the most of his life.

* * * *

Monday, February 16, 1942

Last Saturday I preached at the SAJ synagogue on "Saadia Gaon: A Reconstructionist of a Thousand Years Ago." That Sabbath happened to be "Sabbath Sheholom" which commemorates the ancient victory of the Pharisees in the controversy over the question: who should defray the cost of the daily sacrifice. Saadia the millenary of whose death is observed this year may be accounted as one of the outstanding leaders of traditional Judaism and therefore as having enabled that ancient victory of the Pharisees to continue bearing fruit. Hence the propriety of dwelling on this Sabbath on Saadia's significance for Judaism.

After giving the historic background of Saadia's life, a summary of the highlights in his career and a brief description of his works I pointed out Saadia's contribution to Judaism has having been the following: He enabled Judaism to meet the challenge of a competing civilization not by withdrawing into its shell, by segregating itself as it had done during the entire Talmudic period, but by so reconstructing itself as to live with that civilization on an equal footing in a spirit of harmony. He thereby helped Judaism to exercise its universal traits. As compared with Christianity and Mohammedanism, traditional Judaism is often represented as a purely national, even if religious, civilization, without any meanings or implications of a universal character. That is because we are in

the habit of associating the universality of a civilization or religion by the variety of peoples by whom it is accepted or imposed. The truth, however, is that either may prove itself universal in character by absorbing or assimilating elements of other cultures or religions without losing its own individuality. This capacity which Judaism displays whenever it reconstructs itself for the purpose of surviving and creating in a new environment is proof of its universal character. Hence the significance of its hellenization, arabization, germanization, europeanization and contemporaneously its democratization or americanization. Each stage singularly enough is signalized by an authorized or significant new translation of the Bible.

The non-Jewish element which in each of the transformations of Judaism became part of it has consisted of both form and content. a) The aspect of form: abstract thought, logical order and (?p.286) , division of a problem into various phases, classification of the subject matter of knowledge, the formulation of general principles and their application; attention to exactitude of expression, to unity of composition and logical sequences; individual authorship instead of collective and anonymous. b) The aspect of content: acceptance of empirical experience and rational interpretation, the appreciation of humanistic culture, the recognition of earthly happiness as legitimate aim and criterion of desirable conduct.

It took me an hour and ten minutes to deliver the ~~talk~~ talk, but I managed to hold the attention of the audience, an unusually large number of seminary men were present. Fortunately the sermon was acceptable both from the standpoint of substance and delivery, otherwise I should have felt very badly.

The "Festival of Jewish Arts" given last Saturday night at Town Hall under the auspices of the Reconstructionist Foundation was very successful. Among the artists that participated were Jacob Weinberg, Viola Philo, Saul Meisels, Benjamin Zemach, Judith and Ira deserve the main credit for having organized the Festival.

The sermon in class today was given by Sidney Greenberg, fourth year man. It dealt with the trite theme of anti-Semitism,. Nevertheless I was able to cast it into a somewhat new form. The following is the outline I gave the men:

Introd. The special Sabbath Zakor adds a spiritual significance to the event commemorated on Purim, by stressing the deeper meaning of Israel's persecution than that derivable from the story of Esther. It emphasizes the fact that the Jew is persecuted not only for what he is or cannot help being but also for what he represents for Judaism.

In the past the Jew knew what he represented and accepted it gladly. That gave dignity to his suffering. Nowadays he neither knows nor accepts what he represents. Along come modern thinkers and point out that whether the Jew know it or not, he does represent in the minds of his enemies very definitely something for which they want to destroy him. Cf. Samuels's "The Great Hatred,

MacMurrays' "The Cue to History" and Montan's "The Christian Looks at anti-Semitism."

What the Jew represents to those who want to destroy him should be clearly formulated so that he himself may learn to understand and appreciate it. It is not identical entirely with what he represented either to himself or to his persecutors in the past, though latent and implied in the latter. That for which the Jew is condemned by Nazism is 1) a conception of reality in which God is identified with justice and not with power, with the tendency to render as many as possible fit to survive and make the most out of life instead of with the jungle law of the survival of the most ruthless. 2) A conception of humanity based on faith in its ultimate unity, hence one in which internationalism is regarded as a desirable influence, and 3) a conception of personality in which the sacredness of the individual is regarded as invaluable.

It now devolves upon the Jew to make this conception of what he represents in the minds of his bitterest enemies and most determined persecutors, the very basis of a program for his life as a Jew.

Saturday, February 21, 1942

When I gave my talk at the Rodeph Sholom Synagogue at the Friday night gathering on December twelfth, a Mr. Rosenstock, a lawyer who regards himself as a Zionist was there. Apparently desirous of worming his way into Judge Jerome Frank's friendship, he wrote at length to Frank, reporting what I had said about his article. In that letter he mentioned my having stated that someone had told me that Frank had been asked to submit his article to rabbis or others who could speak with authority about Jewish life, and that he had refused. I had made that statement on the basis of a telephone call which I had received about six weeks before the article appeared. The person that called said he wanted to see me about doing something to a forthcoming article by a prominent Jewish judge recently appointed to the Federal bench. He claimed to have gotten that information from someone on the inside of the Saturday Evening Post. When I suggested that he go to Stephen Wise he gave some reason, which I cannot recall, for not wanting to go to him. Having no stomach for any kind of anti-defamation work whether directed against Gentiles or Jews, I referred him to Eugene Kohn. The person who had called never showed up.

After a few days I received a letter from Judge Frank telling me of Rosenstock's communication to him, and asking me upon what I had based my above mentioned statement, which, he said, was absolutely untrue, as far as he was concerned. I replied immediately, telling him the source of my information and apologizing for having made the statement. I sent a copy of the letter to Rosenstock. The next time I heard from Frank was when through the mediation of Dr. Beryl Levy I was to see him and discuss the article with him. That appointment which was to have taken place some time about the middle of January was called off because he could not adjourn court in time.

When I got back from my lecture tour in the mid west I found a 12 page single-spaced letter from him with one or two appendices. In that letter he entered into a detailed argument on the assumption, which he based on the information he had gotten from Rosenstock, that I questioned the facts concerning the rapid disintegration of Jewish life. He had gotten the impression that I had condemned him for having falsified the facts about Jewish life. He therefore went on to quote

passage after passage from "Judaism as a Civilization" which he read through industriously to prove that I gave similar parts in my book. He supplemented the latter with those found in recent issues of the Reconstructionist. Knowing that I had also blamed him for having expressed satisfaction with the rapid break up of Jewish life and individuality, he maintained that I was wrong in drawing that inference from what he claimed was merely a description but not evaluation of the facts of Jewish life. The rest of the letter was devoted to a savage attack on Gordis, whose reply to Frank's article had been published in the Reconstructionist (Vol VII, 17). In that reply there happens to appear a sentence in quotation marks which are intended to sum up what is purported to be Frank's main contention, but which are not meant to indicate a quotation from his article. The average reader, however, is apt to mistake that sentence as a direct quotation. The following is the sentence in question: By this simple formula "American loyalty equals Jewish disloyalty and vice versa" Frank has dealt a body blow to the right of all American Jews etc. This use of quotation marks around words he did not actually use infuriated him. Personally, I believe the very fact that Gordis brought out into bold relief what Frank actually feels but was reluctant to admit ~~in~~ or to state expressly was what made Frank uncomfortable.

At first I was inclined to answer Frank's letter point for point. I got as far as actually writing out a brief reply. On Ira's advice, however, I merely sent a short note in which I just mentioned the fact that the substance of his letter was based on Rosenstock's failure to give him a correct notion of what I had actually said in my talk at Rodeph Shalom, and I indicated that I should prefer to discuss the letter with him personally. I finally got to see him yesterday at his chambers in the United States Court House downtown. We discussed for two hours, between 4:00 and 6:00 P.M. The following contains the main points I made in support of my criticism of his article:

I opened the discussion by stating that before we dealt with the particular matter that brought us together we should orient ourselves with regard to each other. Since he had read my book he knew my attitude toward Judaism. I suggested that we glance over the article by Niebuhr which has appeared in this week's issue of "The Nation" since it formulated very clearly and succinctly the philosophy of Judaism which I had been promulgating. He did so, and said that while he understood the points made by Niebuhr he did not agree with him, as he did not agree with me. As for his own attitude, he was rather vague in his attempt to formulate it. Fortunately he resorted to an incident which made his position sufficiently clear for the purpose of our discussion. Some fifteen years ago, he said, Weizmann tried to argue him into Zionism. He credited W. with being honest and straightforward in his person to person discussions -- though not in his public utterances. He was impressed by the following remark of Weizman's "I am an east-European Jew with the cultural background and the tragic experiences with which only east-European Jews are familiar. My understanding of Zionism derives from that background and those experiences. You on the other hand are a west-European or what is the same as an American Jew. As such you lack the very conditions necessary for the understanding of Zionism." This Frank interpreted as meaning that his universe of discourse is entirely different from that of Weizman's. He then went on to say that his bringing up was such as to make him sense no need whatever for that which Zionism tried to accomplish.

It is interesting to note that virtually in his entire conversation with me he addressed me as though I was speaking not for Judaism but for Zionism. To explain further his general attitude he alluded to a letter by Morris R. Cohen which appeared recently in the N.Y. Times in approval of an editorial which had appeared in that paper against the demand for a Jewish army in Palestine. In that letter Cohen stated that he regarded eighteenth century rationalism and its ideal of world citizenship as setting forth the norm of human life. Despite the failure of mankind to translate that norm into political and economic policies, we should nevertheless uphold it and not join the general stampede into romantic nationalism. (I am not quoting but merely giving the general spirit of his

letter.) According to Frank, who said that Cohen's attitude toward Zionism coincided with his own Cohen was not an assimilationist.

Here, by the way, is another interesting fact. Most assimilationist Jews resent being identified as such. I am not even sure that Cohen himself would not object to being called an assimilationist. It would be worthwhile to analyze the reasons for this aversion to the term assimilationist. Probably the fact that it indicates a certain degree of surrender, and therefore disqualifies one from the prerogatives of leadership. This repudiation of their leadership in Jewish life is what Jewish assimilationists of the usual type object to because it deprives them of the opportunity of carrying out one of their chief heart-s desires, that of liquidating Jewish life. They are vitally interested in having Jewish life liquidated, not because they think it is best for the Jews but because they think it is best for themselves. They would thus be freed from the numerous claims and vexations which interfere with their business and their pleasures.

How much of an assimilationist Frank is may be seen from something he said incidentally. Referring to Solomon Goldman's description of his attitude, in an article in the "Zionist" as an expression of Jewish self-hate, he added that he did not deny the truth of that description. As a member of a disappearing (he did not use that word) minority group, it was natural for him to experience a certain degree of self-hatred. The members of Italian, Polish and other groups felt the same way, he said. In view of his admission that he and the Jews for whom he spoke belonged to a different universe of discourse from the one to which I and those for whom I spoke belonged, it was easy for me to drive home the following points:

1) Despite the one sentence in his long letter to me of Jan. 20 which reads "But a man's statement of an existing fact or of a factual trend is not a statement of a wish" and which was intended to deny that he welcomed the fact that Jews were becoming less and less Jewish, I made plain to him that there was no escaping the conclusion from the entire argument in his article that he did regard the dejudaization of the Jew as desirable. His purpose in writing the article

was to prove that the charge of the America First Committee that the Jews were warmongers was unfounded. This he proceeded to do by insisting that the Jews do not think on American issues as Jews but as Americans. Had he stopped at that point no one could have found fault with his article. But in order to drive his argument home he found it necessary to describe the inner life of the Jews and to show that they are becoming deJudaized in the process of their becoming Americanized. Since he could not be regard their becoming americanized as highly desirable, he could not but imply that since the process of americanization takes place pari passu with the process of deJudaization, the latter is necessarily as desirable to him as the former.

2) The resentment which his article aroused in those of us whom he lumps together as Zionist, by reason of the fact that we regard Palestine as indispensable to Judaism is due chiefly to his impugning our Americanism. He actually tried to charge me personally with not giving first place to America in my group loyalties, but rather to Palestine. He said he gathered that from "Judaism As A Civilization" and then proceeded to give a summary of what I had to say there about the three zones into which Jewish life will henceforth have to be divided. Since I admitted that it was not possible for a Jew to live a full Jewish life in America, he maintained that I implied that I deplored our having to live in America. That this is nothing but sophistry is quite evident. I parried his false inference by challenging him to find anything in the book which indicated that I deplored the diaspora condition of Jewish life as inherently regrettable.

3) In the article he motivates the process of deJudaization on the ground that it is necessary to correct the impression created in the mind of the American public concerning American-Jewish attitudes by "intense Jewish nationalists among the Zionist and certain 'professional Jews.'" The statement in the article reads as follows: "They (the majority of American Jews) have mistakenly allowed the more intense Jewish nationalists among the Zionists and certain "professional Jews' to do most of the talking in public about American Jewish attitudes." In his letter to me he defined "intense Jewish nationalists" as those "who identify themselves completely with Palestine." I challenged him to name a single

such nationalist and Zionist who does any talking in public about American Jewish attitudes. He was completely stumped, for the simple reason that there is no such person in existence. Realizing that I had put him on the spot he tried to squirm out by ~~discussing~~ diverting the discussion to the question of the Jewish army, admitting as he did so tht it was a diversion. He realized, of course, that he had been in the wrong on that point, and admitted as much though, of course, only half-heartedly.

Despite it all he would want me to write an article in the Reconstructionist pointing out as he says in his reply to me of Feb. 5 that "Gordis was seriously inaccurate." That is of course absurd I have asked Ira to make sure that there appears a correction in the forthcoming issue of the one sentence in quotation marks, referred to above.

On the whole I cannot say that I was impressed by Franks judicial qualities. His position as Federal judge in the circuit court of appeals is next only to that of the U.S. Supreme Court. Yet he displayed neither the freedom from prejudice, nor the analytic ability, nor the intellectual honesty that one has a right to expect of one who occupies so important a position.

* * *

Wednesday, March 4, 1942

From the standpoint of our striving for salvation, nothing in the conception of God is as important as that which would help us to regard life as worthwhile despite the waste, suffering and cruelty that attend it. This is what all theodicies have attempted to do but so far not a single one of them has succeeded. They are based for the most part upon the following assumptions: 1) God must be conceived as timeless, or if we are to ascribe time to him he must be conceived as unchanging in time, and therefore eternally perfect. 2) As absolutely good as well as absolutely omnipotent. On that basis all evil had to be explained away either as illusion or as a necessary means to good. It is evident that neither explanation really accounts for the existence of evil, since a God who is both omnipotent and good should be able to achieve his purpose without even the illusion

of evil. Insofar as these two assumptions do not help to render life intelligible they may be regarded as standing in the way of rendering life worthwhile for only as life or reality appears intelligible can it be worthwhile.

The fact that life must appear intelligible to be worthwhile means that in the attainment of salvation the formal cause as represented by the rational interests and their values must operate no less than the final cause as represented by the spiritual interests and their values. Without entering into a detailed discussion of what constitutes intelligibility it is necessary at this point to define it sufficiently to show its relation to worthwhileness. Intelligibility does not preclude the element of mystery. On the contrary we cannot go far in the analysis of any phase of reality without coming up against some fact or datum which we cannot penetrate. Thus we cannot account for anything whatever from the standpoint of its ontological existence. All we do is take note of the conditions under which it occurs and to assume that it will go on existing so long as those conditions obtain. Nevertheless, we accept what we experience as real and consider it intelligible, despite the fact that it harbors a vast element of mystery. We ascribe our inability to resolve the mystery to the inherent limitations of the human mind. This is the case because there is no alternative to our accepting the unresolved character of the mystery.

It is otherwise, however, with the various theodicies. The assumptions on which they are based are by no means the only possible assumptions with regard to God. On the contrary there are alternative assumptions which give to the conception of God or configuration that makes the existence of evil compatible with life's worthwhileness. Since that is so we should certainly satisfy the demand for intelligibility by preferring the alternative assumptions. Hence we may adopt as a general principle that for any aspect of reality, be it event, process or thing to contribute to salvation it must meet the following requirement of intelligibility: wherever two or more assumptions concerning any aspect of reality are possible, adopt that one which calls for least resort to the unknowable, in the sense of the pre-rational, the super rational or the irrational.

What then are the alternative assumptions which might remove the incompatibility of the existence of evil with the worthwhileness of life or with faith in the spiritual values - God, humanity and personality?

In the first place, it is necessary to make clear that in common discourse we employ the spiritual values in two different ways, which are often confused with each other and therefore lead to many ambiguities. One way of using them is as designating only an aspect of reality, that aspect which constitutes the consummation either of reality as a whole, of mankind or of personality. The other way of using them is as designating reality as a whole, or of a part of reality in all its aspects viewed from the standpoint of its consummation. Thus e.g. when we refer to a man's personality we may refer only to the culmination of everything that goes into the making of him as a person, or we may refer to the sum of all those things that enter into his being, such as his body with all its needs and traits, his relations to his environment, etc. insofar as they culminate in his becoming a person.

Applying the foregoing distinction to our idea of God we have to distinguish between 1) God as only that aspect of reality which constitutes its self-fulfilment and 2) God as the very ground of reality viewed from the standpoint of its consummation. We might call the first the consummatory idea of God and the second the existential idea of God. Either idea of God is an idea of Him as a power that makes for salvation. But the difference between them is in the place to be given to the existence of evil. In the consummatory conception of God there is no place for evil, for the consummation of reality as such implies the elimination of evil. Of that conception of God only is it proper to say that God is the absolute negation of all evil. But that conception of God is not a conception of actuality but of potentiality to be actualized ultimately at some point in time infinitely removed. The consummatory conception of God is thus a conception of reality viewed statically, or as Spinoza put it, *sub specie aeternitatis*. There is no need of a theodicy when we have in mind this static or consummatory conception of God, for the simple reason that that very conception implies that all evil has been eliminated. In Jewish traditional literature there occurs an expression

which has in it something of the connotations here associated with the consummatory conception of God. That expression is used in connection with Amalek, who figures as anti-God and reads thus "So long as Amalek exists the Tetragrammaton is defective; when Amalek is no more the Tetragrammaton will be complete."

On the other hand, in the existential idea of God, evil is an integral part of the very idea, and all theodicies which attempt to explain away evil by proving its function as an element of good are uncalled for. God as the ground of reality is from a metaphysical standpoint described accurately in the statement of the unknown prophet who speaks of God as forming light and creating darkness, making peace and creating evil, and who alone is the maker of the universe, far more accurately than in the Zoroastrian religion which the prophet apparently controverts. Likewise in Kabbalah, where Satan is spoken of as the "Other Side" the "Left side" of the Godhead. The problem of finding a place for evil in the soterical view of life could, of course, exist only in monotheistic religions like the Jewish, the Christian and the Moslem religions. In every one of them it is only the introduction of the philosophic approach that led to the kind of theodicy which sought to represent evil as an element of good. But in their pristine form all three religions see nothing objectionable in regarding evil as an integral part of reality, and nothing incompatible in conceiving God as the creator of the whole of reality.

It is a mistake to interpret "Job" as an attempt to grapple with the problem of evil as such. We read into it entirely too much when we interpret it in that way. All that the author or authors of Job tried to solve was the problem raised by the fact that experience contradicted the old standing assumption that a person's lot in life corresponded with his obedience of God's will. This is far from being the same as the problem of evil. That problem would exist just the same even if there were a correspondence between one's lot and one's deserts. Moreover it does not begin to touch the vast areas of cruelty and suffering in the world that are uninvaded by human actions. A far closer approach to posing the problem of evil is found in Habakuk I where the Prophet addressed God thus:

"Thine eyes are too pure to rest on evil, thou canst not look on at oppression. Why then look on at ruthless men. Why then be silent when the impious are swallowing up the good? Thou hast made men like fishes in the sea, like swarms without a chief." But Habakuk rests his case at that. He is no theologian and does not attempt any theodicy. He merely voices his perplexity and goes on asserting his faith that ultimately everything will come out right. "But the righteous shall live by his faith."

* * * *

Thursday, March 5, 1942

It is this faith which has given birth to the consummatory conception of God. This in fact may be said to be the principal contribution of the Prophets to the conception of God. We may not want to associate with the great Prophets the rather vulgar function of prognosticating the future, a function performed by a whole guild of foretellers, including wizards, magicians, etc. But they undoubtedly took into their purview much more than their contemporary situation. So real and inevitable did the culmination of the chain of events often seem to them, that it appeared to them as already realized. (Cf. Jeremiah 4, 19 sq. et al) That was a fundamental trait of their mentality. It is understandable therefore that in their conception of God they would tend to contemplate not the confused scene of contemporaneous events in which His power and goodness are obscured but the scene of the future they envisaged in which His power and goodness stood out with great clarity. But that vision of God was for them not a thing of the future, but a realized present. That is to say, they permitted their consummatory conception of God to dominate their minds completely, to the exclusion of the existential conception. Their habit of conceiving God has been adopted and intensified by the monotheistic religions, due perhaps, not so much to the influence of the Prophets themselves as to the fact that beginning with Plato, Greek philosophy too accentuated the consummatory conception of God. Before his time a god was merely the personified conception of some fragment, large or small of reality with all the good and bad in it. If we are to use the term "religions" in a sense which implies an attitude of worship it may be said that prior to Plato the term god was not

necessarily used in a religious sense. It is quite certain, e.g. that the pre-Socratic philosophers did not use it in that sense. According to Burnet when Thaler is quoted by Arst as saying that the world is full of gods, he does not really mean "gods." Likewise Anaximander's "Indeterminate" though spoken of as "divine" is not an object of worship at all. In the same category we would perhaps have to include Aristotle's First Cause or unmoved mover. The reason I say perhaps is that it is not quite clear whether God as the final cause represents only the consummatory character of reality, in which case he would be an object of worship, or the ground of reality as such, and therefore to be understood in an existential sense.

¶ As for Platon's use of the term "God" we may accept Etienne Gilson's statement, in which he says "A Platonic god is a living individual endowed with all the fundamental attributes of an Idea (viz. intelligible, immutable, necessary and eternal.) This is the reason why a Platonic Idea (e.g. the Good) can be more divine than a god, and yet not be a god" ("God and Philosophy" 27-28. the parts in brackets are mine.) Gilson's phrase "more divine than a god" seems to make no sense. But what it means is that whereas a god, as a fragment of reality, necessarily contains elements which we, with our idea of godhood, refuse to regard as divine, a Platonic Idea is free of all such elements. A Platonic Idea is therefore a consummatory conception of a god. Hence the "God" which is the highest Idea of all is actually God conceived in consummatory terms.

This phase of Plato's philosophy, i.e. the tendency inherent in the very notion of Ideas to think in consummatory terms influenced the Stoics in their conception of God and man. The Stoics identified "Nature" not with actuality in its manifold of good and evil, rational and irrational, but only Reason, as it manifests itself on a universal scale in the world and on a small scale in man. The World-Reason was for them God and human reason was for them man's soul which is consubstantial with God. It is evident that what they did was to stress not the existential but the consummatory aspect of reality as a whole and of man in particular. To them as to Aristotle a thing is essentially not whence it

the refusal of traditional religion to consider the existential conception of God and its determination to confine itself to the interpretation of experience from the standpoint only of the consummatory conception of God. This self-imposed limitation was due to the inability of the ancients to realize that in order to adjust ourselves to reality and to make the most of our lives we are compelled to think in two dimensions, viz: existentially and valuationally. When we think in the dimension of values, we necessarily tend to view reality in consummatory terms, since it is what an object comes to be that gives it its main value, i.e. its place in relation to our own self-fulfilment. The trouble in the past has been that valuational thinking was regarded as the only one necessary for human self-fulfilment. As a result of scientific progress it has become evident that existential thinking is no less important for salvation. In fact some of the devotees of science would banish any other kind of thinking. That of course is absurd. But there can be no question that existential thinking has become indispensable to salvation not only with regard to the sequences of phenomena, i.e. as science, but also with regard to the ~~given~~ ground of reality i.e. as metaphysics. The demand for a metaphysical conception of God as the ground of reality has become an inescapable part of any system of salvation which means to grapple with the problem of evil. No system of salvation which refuses to grapple with that problem can expect to win a hearing.

Existentially God is the ground of reality, or reality as revealed to the human mind functioning in both dimensions of thought both the existential and the valuational. This implies that the values have an objective existence of their own. Good and evil accordingly are as real as the objects of the senses, or the processes of nature. Good and evil therefore exist in God. But in order to know how they exist it is necessary to note some of the existential attributes of reality which by themselves do not yield the categories good and evil. Among these existential attributes are permanence, change, unity in diversity, diversity in unity, polarity, tension, integration disintegration, life, consciousness, intelligence. These attributes as attributes are conceived by the human intelligence. Human intelligence recognizing that it is not self-created but that except

for an infinitesimal element within itself it is the product of the whole of reality it cannot but regard the whole of reality as suffused with or governed by intelligence which is by reason of the immensity and complexity of the cosmos infinitely beyond the power of human intelligence to conceive. This does not prevent the human intelligence, however, from catching some glimpse of the true nature of reality. Those attributes which have been mentioned constitute such a glimpse.

Of these attributes the most central or pervasive is evidently polarity. One aspect of polarity is of particular interest for the understanding of good and evil from the existential standpoint. The attribute of polarity means that there can be no light without darkness, no life without death, no integration without disintegration, no pleasure without pain, no consciousness without conflict, ~~what~~ difficulty, danger or pain, etc. This is reality as it actually is. Viewed existentially either pole of reality is necessary to the other, and is neither good nor bad; merely is. As both poles function there is tension. Each tension is somehow resolved. The resolution of the tension may be in one or two directions: 1) in favor of more life, consciousness, intelligence, or 2) less life, consciousness, intelligence. The point in reality at which intelligence is ~~attained~~ attained becomes the point at which the process of valuation enters the picture. In that process reality comes to be viewed in hierarchal fashion as consisting of more important and less important, higher and lower, elements of existence, goods greater and lesser and evils greater and lesser.

It is evident that we cannot wait until some consensus be achieved with regard to the proper hierarchy of values. We must therefore ~~put~~ propose one ourselves in the hope that it may be acceptable as a working hypothesis. That hierarchy would be based on the following principle: 1) The attributes of reality from the standpoint of their value should be ranged in the following order: a) life, b) consciousness, c) intelligence (in the broadest sense which implies the harmonious operation of all human values); 2) Any resolution of a tension which raises the object in which the tension exists from a lower to a higher stage of existence is good. Evil is any resolution of a tension which depresses the object in which the tension exists from a higher to a lower stage of existence.

Existentially both types of resolution are part of reality, hence reality as such unquestionably harbors both good and evil. But existentially intelligence includes faith. As intelligence is the product of the whole of reality, so is faith which is part of intelligence, the product of the whole of reality. Faith as we have seen means looking beyond the existential view of reality to the consummatory. The consummatory view itself is integral to reality viewed existentially. This means that reality despite the harboring evil is moving in the direction of eliminating it, or having all its tensions resolved into higher powers of being. This is what we mean by those two attributes which religion ascribes to God, viz redemption and creativity. What creativity is to reality as a whole redemption is to human life in particular. In a sense the redemption of the individual and people from their own physical or moral afflictions or from those imposed on them by others is an act of creation. Likewise the sprouting of the flower from the earth is the redemption of the power dormant in the seed.

In the foregoing account of good and evil no attempt is made to minimize their reality. All that is done is to place them in a configuration of reality in which no element is slighted or ignored. Such a configuration of reality may be different from that porposed by medieval theology, but it is at least one which on the whole conforms with those configurations which human beings in their striving for salvation intuitively work out for themselves, even if it be in inarticulate fashion.

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Tuesday, March 10, 1942

Wed. Feb. 25 I took part in a special session arranged by the Jewish Board of Ministers of this city. The session took place at the Seminary and was devoted to problems which arose out of the present war. My paper was on "Preaching in War Time." There were about 60 present at the time I read my paper. It was followed by discussion.

The Board includes rabbis of all shades of belief and practice. Heterogeneity has the advantage of teaching people of different views to get along with one another, but the getting along remains on a very superficial level. There is no likelihood that any attempt would be made to go to the bottom of problems and difficulties. This is why I have never attended any of the meetings of the Board. I accepted this invitation - shall I say out of vanity? Bienenfeld, a Seminary graduate was the chairman of arrangements and he turned to me for a paper on the subject of preaching for these days. As a professor of homiletics and with the session taking place at the Seminary I could not refuse without "loss of face." The paper which I read dealt with the following points: Jewish preaching these days should concern itself with 1) enabling the Jewish tradition to function as vigorously as possible; 2) interpreting the Jewish tradition so that it may yield the purposes necessary to give meaning to the war against tyranny and ruthlessness -- those purposes which we identify with genuine democracy; 3) interpreting the Jewish tradition so that it may yield the ~~new~~ vision necessary for a proper perspective in the present crisis -- the vision which enables us to see God in history; 4) interpreting the Jewish tradition so that it may inspire us with the morale needed to turn the scales in favor of victory.

The paper was well received. I am glad I had to write it, mainly, however because it led me to realize more clearly than ever why the Psalms had such a hold on people in the past. I discovered that its context is such as to inspire courage and confidence when attacked by enemies. Since people have always enemies either actual or imaginary, they are bound to welcome whatever affords them morale. The Psalms did that to an extraordinary degree.

In the discussion of the B'nai Menahem group which met at my house last Wed., March 4, I had occasion to develop some ideas on the place of art in the reconstruction of Jewish life. One was that art is significant only as it grows out of actual life and its needs; otherwise it is certain to be practiced in a vacuum and to become more and more esoteric. The other idea was that we must identify all the possible areas of Jewish life where it still functions and concentrate

on beautifying them in every conceivable fashion through all the arts.

At the recent session of the Seminar which I hold at the Seminary every other Thursday night the discussion veered away from the text of Hocking's "Living Religions and a World Faith" and turned upon a statement made by Dr. Simon Greenberg, who this year has become assistant professor of Jewish education, to the effect that as Jews we must believe that our religion and our ethics are truer and better than those of any other people. Anyone who refuses to accept this belief, he said, had no right to be a rabbi or to preach or teach Judaism. The students wanted me to tell them what I thought of that statement. Of course I pooh-poohed it. By the time we were through the men were grateful for my having thrown light on the question of our right as a people to feel superior.

That is a question which troubles every Seminary student, because during the first twenty years of his life he has the notion of the "chosen people" drummed into him on every possible occasion. My colleagues on the Faculty not only do nothing to eradicate that notion, but on the contrary try expressly and by implication to confirm it in the minds of the students. I am the only one who tries to have them unlearn that notion. I have the advantage of having truth and common sense on my side. Subconsciously the students revolt at the belief that we have the best of what man needs for his salvation. The more earnest and intellectual among them welcome the emancipation which I help them achieve by telling them they can not only be good Jews but also rabbis on the sole ground that we want to make the most of our lives as Jews. For that purpose we should accept moral and religious truth from any one who has it to offer.

